

Paying *Zakah al-Fitr* with Money

Q&A with Shaykh Sulayman
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Question: *As-salamu ‘alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh.* As for what follows... A dispute has occurred between some of the brothers regarding the ruling of paying the *zakah* in money instead of food. Each had his opinion from a knowledge-based point of view, and I will summarise it for you quickly:

The first person says: It is prohibited to pay the *Zakah al-Fitr* in money because it goes against what the Messenger (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) did. **The second person says:** It is preferred to pay it in food, and paying it with money is permissible, however it is in opposition to the Sunnah. **The third person says:** It is preferred to look at the situation of the poor person and the situation of his country and environment, because money might be better for him.

So my question, O respected Shaykh, did any of the *Salaf* give a *fatwa* to pay it with money instead of food? And is it better for someone

to pay with money, because the needy prefers that?

The Shaykh’s answer: *Wa ‘alaykum as-salam wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh.* All praise belongs to Allah. And may the *salah* and *salam* [of Allah] be upon the Messenger of Allah. As for what follows... This is one of differed upon issues, and the leading scholars of the *Salaf* differ regarding paying *Zakah al-Fitr* with money. Saying this opinion or that opinion is more correct is a matter of *ijtihad*, thus no one who differs should call the other person misguided or an innovator.

The foundation regarding the differences of opinion in the likes of this issue, is that it should not break the friendship and love between those who dispute, nor to have any rancor in their hearts, for all of them are good, and there’s no blame upon someone who settles with [an opinion] from what he hears. Many of the leading scholars would

say in their speech regarding the differed upon matters: “Our statements are correct, while it could contain mistakes, and the statements of others are mistaken, but it could contain the truth.”

The majority of the leading scholars have leaned towards saying that it is not permissible to take out money for *Zakah al-Fitr*. Imam Ahmad said, “I fear that it won’t suffice; it is in opposition to the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*).” This is [also] the *mathhab* of Malik and ash-Shafi‘i. And Imam ibn Hazm said, “Money is not sufficient by default, because that is not what the Messenger of Allah (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) has mandated.” And ‘Ata, al-Hasan al-Basri, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdil-‘Aziz, ath-Thawri, Abu Hanifah, and others leaned towards the permissibility of paying it with money instead of food.

Abu Ishaq as-Sabi‘i - who is one of the leading scholars of the *tabi‘in* - said, “I have seen them (i.e., the *Sahabah*) pay the *sadaqah* in Ramadan with monies in its value of food,” narrated by Imam ibn Abi Shaybah in *al-Musannaf*. And the proof for that is:

1. That there is no text proven from the Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) nor any of the *Sahabah* regarding the impermissibility of paying with money.
2. The text within the reported *ahadith* mentioning specific types of food doesn’t mean what is apart from it is forbidden, and the proof for that is that the *Sahabah* (*radiyallahu ‘anhum*) permitted taking out wheat - and it is not specified by the text - instead of barley, dates, and similar to that from the different kinds that are narrated in the authentic *ahadith*.

3. Many of the *Sahabah*, rather most of them, during the era of Mu‘awiyah, leaned towards the permissibility of giving out half a *sa’* (i.e., 2.5-3.0 kg’s) from the brown wheat of *ash-Sham* instead of a *sa’* of dates, so this is evidence that they saw half a *sa’* equal to the price of a *sa’* of dates or barley and similar to that.

4. The purpose behind *zakah* is enrichment of the poor, and money is more beneficial for some of them instead of food, so in that case, you would check to see the situation of the poor in each country.

5. Many of the needy take the food and sell it on the same day or the next day below its actual price. Thus he did not benefit from the food, and it was not him who took the value of it. And Allah knows best.